

MALTESE FALCON

A POPEYE MYSTERY



CREATED BY AARON KREBECK OF WRLC
TO CELEBRATE PUBLIC DOMAIN DAY
2025

I YAM WHAT I YAM, AND RIGHT NOW, I'M A GUMSHOE SITTIN'
IN ME OFFICE, PUFFIN' ME PIPE. IN WALKS A LADY WITH
LEGS FER DAYS AN' A STORY EVEN LONGER. SHE WANTS
HELP FINDIN' HER SISTER--SURE SHE DOES.

I COULD SMELL A WHOPPER OF A TALE, BUT SHE HAD
SPINACH FER PAY, SO I SAYS, 'AYE, I'LL TAKES THE CASE.'



SHE SENDS ME PARTNER, OL' MILES, TO TAIL A FELLER NAMED THURSBY. SAYS HE'S A NO-GOODNIK WHO NABBED HER SIS. MILES TAKES THE JOB, WHISTLIN' LIKE A SAILOR WITH SHORE LEAVE. ME? I STICKS CLOSE TO PORT, LETTIN' THE TIDE BRING THE TROUBLE TO ME.



MILES DIDN'T MAKE IT BACK TO THE DOCK. HE GOT PLUGGED IN THE FOG, AN' THE COPS DRAGGED ME OUTTA BED TO HAVE A LOOK-SEE. 'TWEREN'T PRETTY. POOR MILES--ALWAYS WAS TOO SWEET ON DAMES FER HIS OWN GOOD. I SWABBED ME THOUGHTS CLEAN.

SOMEBODY'S GOTTA PAY FER THIS.



NEXT MORNIN', THURSBY TURNS UP DEAD TOO.
SOMEBODY'S CLEARIN' THE DECK, AN' IT AIN'T ME.
THE COPS START SQUINTIN' AT ME LIKE I'M THE ONE
WHAT DID IT. I DON'T LIKES BEIN' CORNERED, SO I
STARTS SNIFFIN' FER THE TRUTH.



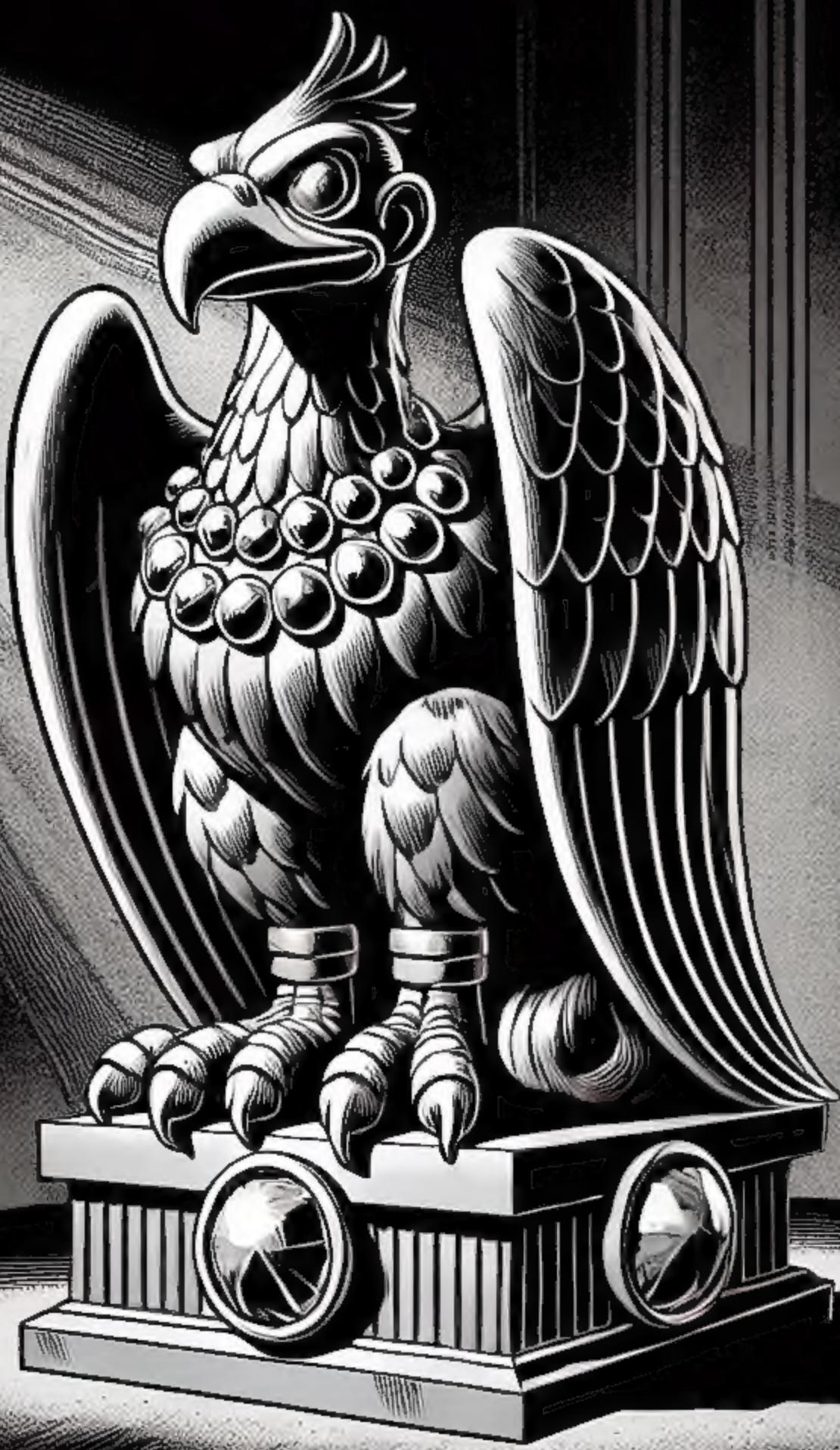
BRIGID--DAT'S THE DAME--COMES BACK SNIFFIN' AN' SNIVELLIN'. TURNS OUT, THERE AIN'T NO SISTER, NO KIDNAPPIN'. JUST A SHINY HUNK O' JUNK CALLED THE MALTESE FALCON. I KNEW SHE WAS A SLIPPERY FISH, BUT THIS? THIS WAS SOMETHIN' ELSE.



NEXT THING I KNOWS, A SQUIRT NAMED CAIRO POPS IN,
FLASHIN' A GUN AN' WAVIN' FIVE GRAND IN ME FACE.
HE'S LOOKIN' FER THE FALCON, AN' HE'S WILLIN' TO
MAKE THINGS UGLY. I CLOBBERS HIM GOOD--NO ONE
POINTS A GUN AT POPEYE WITHOUT PAYIN' THE PRICE--
AND NOW I KNOWS THERE'S MORE TO THIS FALCON
THAN MEETS THE EYE.



CAIRO COMES TO AND STARTS JABBERIN' ABOUT THE
FALCON--AN OLD, SHINY DOODAD WHAT'S WORTH A
BOATLOAD O' GOLD. SAYS IT'S BEEN SAILIN' THE SEAS
O' HISTORY, LEAVIN' GREED AN' MURDER IN ITS WAKE.
SOUNDS LIKE THE KINDA TROUBLE I MAKES A LIVIN'
OUTTA.



THEN THERE'S GUTMAN. A BIG, FAT WINDBAG WITH A SMILE AS GREASY AS A FRYIN' PAN. HE'S BEEN CHASIN' THE FALCON FER YEARS, AN' HE FIGURES I'M HIS NEXT STEP TO GRABBIN' IT. I LETS HIM THINK I KNOWS SOMETHIN'. AIN'T NOTHIN' FUNNIER THAN WATCHIN' A BLOWHARD BLOW HARDER.



GUTMAN OFFERS ME A FISTFUL O' SPINACH FER THE FALCON, BUT I AIN'T TAKIN' THE BAIT JUST YET. I PLAYS ALONG, LEARNIN' WHAT I CAN WHILE HIS GOON--SOME KID NAMED WILMER--GLARES AT ME LIKE HE'S SPOILIN' FER A FIGHT. I WAS READY TO KNOCK HIS BLOCK OFF, BUT I HELD ME PUNCH.



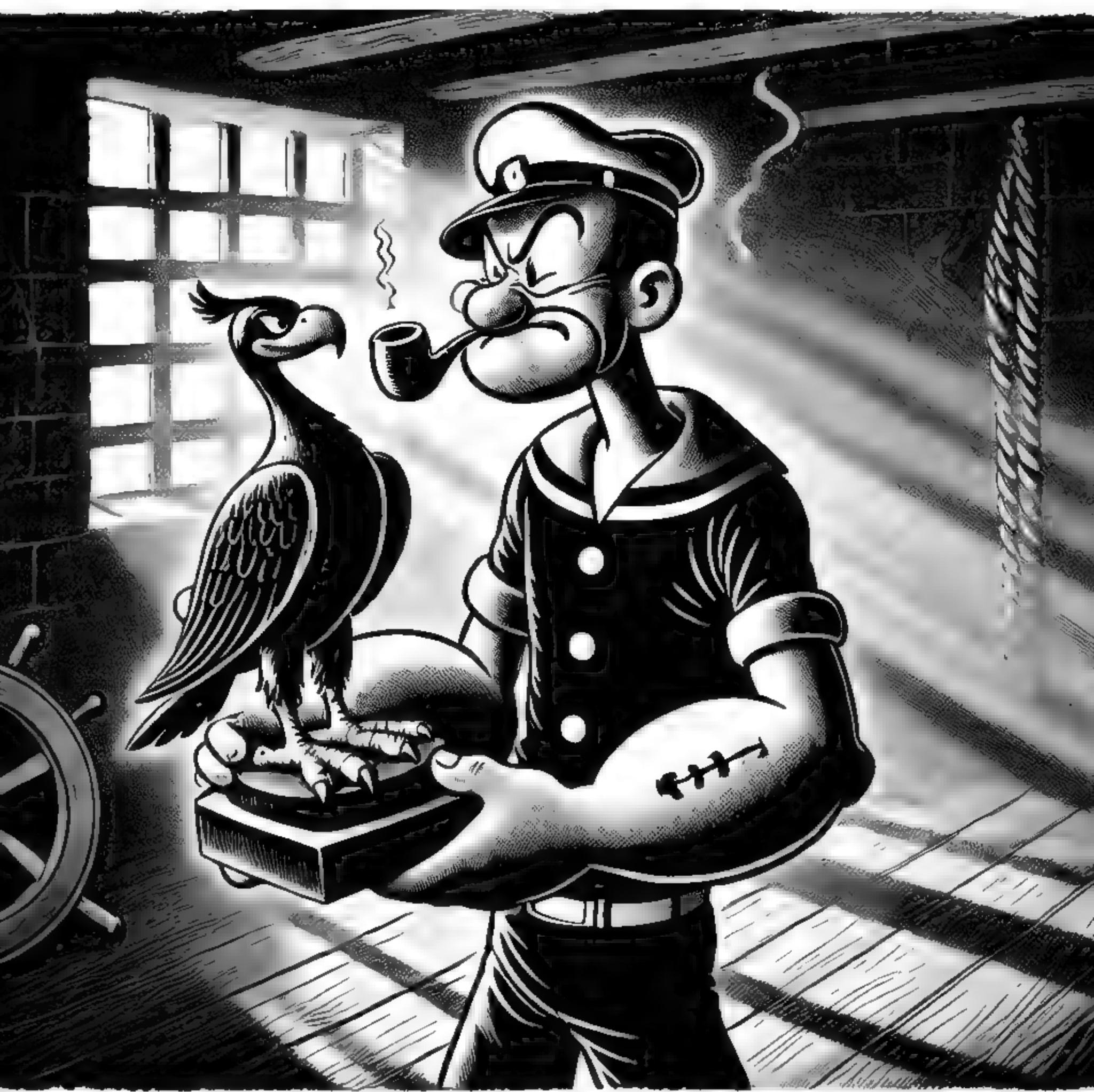
I HEAD BACK TO MY OFFICE AND BRIGID'S THERE,
SQUAWKIN' ABOUT HOW GUTMAN AN' CAIRO ARE OUT
TO KEELHAUL HER. SHE SAYS SHE'S IN TROUBLE--
SURE, SHE IS. I TELLS HER I'LL HELPS HER, BUT
ONLY IF SHE STOPS BLOWIN' SMOKE IN ME FACE.



THE LOT OF 'EM--GUTMAN, CAIRO, BRIGID--ARE RUNNIN'
AROUND LIKE CHICKENS MISSIN' THEIR HEADS, ALL
SQUABBLIN' OVER THIS BIRD. ME? I KEEPS ME HEAD
LOW AN' ME WITS SHARP. I KNEW THE FALCON'D SHOW
UP SOONER OR LATER. SURE ENOUGH, A FELLOW
SAILOR DROPS THE BIRD IN ME HANDS JUST BEFORE
HE DROPS DEAD HIMSELF--SHOT THROUGH THE HEART!



WE FINALLY GETS OUR MITTS ON IT--A BIG, BLACK
STATUE HEAVY ENOUGH TO SINK A SHIP. BUT WOULDN'T
YA KNOW IT? THE BLASTED THING'S A FAKE! A CHEAP
HUNK O' JUNK! SOMEBODY PULLED A FAST ONE, AN'
WE ALL GOT PLAYED LIKE A SQUEEZEBOX.



I BREAK THE BAD NEWS TO GUTMAN AND CAIRO AND THEY SCRAM FOR CONSTANTINOPLE, BUT NOT BEFORE I GRABS SOME SPINACH FOR ME TROUBLES. THEN BRIGID STARTS BLUBBERIN', BUT I COULD SEE THROUGH HER TRICKS. TURNS OUT, SHE WAS USIN' ALL OF US TO GRAB THE BIRD FER HERSELF. SHE WAS SLICKER THAN AN EEL, BUT HER LIES WERE STARTIN' TO STINK.



THEN IT HITS ME--BRIGID'S THE ONE WHAT BUMPED OFF MILES. SWEET MILES, WHO NEVER KNEW WHEN TO DUCK. SHE SHOT HIM LIKE A ROTTEN PIRATE, AN' I WASN'T GONNA LET HER SAIL OFF INTO THE SUNSET.



I LAID IT ALL OUT FER HER. SHE TRIED EVERY TRICK IN
THE BOOK--TEARS, KISSES, PROMISES OF TREASURE--
BUT I AIN'T NO SUCKER. I TOLD HER SHE WAS GONNA
ANSWER FER WHAT SHE DONE, WHETHER SHE LIKED IT
OR NOT.



BRIGID BEGGED ME TO LET HER GO, SAID SHE'D MAKE
ME HAPPY AS A CLAM. I MIGHTA BEEN SOFT FER HER,
BUT I AIN'T SOFT ON JUSTICE. I CALLED THE COPPERS
AN' LET 'EM TAKE HER AWAY. SHE WAS PRETTY, BUT SHE
WEREN'T WORTH ME SOUL.



AS FER GUTMAN AN' CAIRO, I LET THE COPS KNOW THEY WERE HEADED FOR THE HARBOR. WRAPPED THEM UP WITH A BIG, FAT BOW. GUTMAN SQUAWKED LIKE A PARROT, AN' CAIRO JUST SULKED. WILMER? HE FOLDED FASTER THAN A SAILOR WITH BAD CARDS.



THE FALCON WAS GONE, LEAVIN' NOTHIN' BUT BROKEN DREAMS AN' A BUSTED CREW. I LIT ME PIPE AN' TOOK A LONG PUFF, WATCHIN' THE SMOKE CURL LIKE THE SEA ON A WINDY DAY. ANOTHER CASE CLOSED, ANOTHER FISH STORY. THAT'S THE LIFE OF A SAILOR MAN DETECTIVE LIKE ME. YOU GOTTA BE STRONG TO THE FINISH AN' I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY.





THE
END

POP
SPHERE

POP
SPHERE